DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 457 285 UD 034 425

AUTHOR	Smith, David M.; Gates, Gary J.
TITLE	Gay and Lesbian Families in the United States: Same-Sex Unmarried Partner Households. A Preliminary Analysis of 2000 United States Census Data.
INSTITUTION	Human Rights Campaign, Washington, DC.
PUB DATE	2001-08-22
NOTE	13p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Human Rights Campaign, 919 18th St., N.W., Ste. 800, Washington, DC 20006. Tel: 202-628-4160; Fax: 202-347-5323; Web site: http://www.hrc.org.
PUB TYPE	Information Analyses (070) -- Numerical/Quantitative Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	Demography; Family (Sociological Unit); *Homosexuality; Place of Residence; Tables (Data)
IDENTIFIERS	Census 2000; *Homosexual Couples

ABSTRACT

This report presents information from the 2000 United States Census on gay and lesbian families. It notes that the 2000 numbers for same-sex unmarried partner households are a dramatic increase from 1990, but the total number still represents an undercount of the actual number of gay or lesbian coupled households in the country. The Human Rights Campaign estimates that the 2000 U.S. Census count of gay and lesbian families could be undercounted by as much as 62 percent. The 2000 Census reported 601,209 total gay and lesbian families (as opposed to 145,130 in 1990), with California, New York, Texas, and Florida leading the country in total number of same-sex unmarried partner households. Gay and lesbian families live in 99.3 percent of all counties in the United States, compared to 52 percent of all counties in 1990. Many gay and lesbian families live outside major metropolitan areas. Census 2000 reports 88,606 or 15 percent of gay and lesbian families are living outside of metropolitan statistical areas in rural settings. As more information is released from the Census Bureau, the number of children living in gay and lesbian coupled households, income levels, racial profiles, home ownership, and other important demographics may be determined. (SM)

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GAY AND LESBIAN FAMILIES IN THE UNITED STATES: SAME-SEX UNMARRIED PARTNER HOUSEHOLDS

A Preliminary Analysis of 2000 United States Census Data
A Human Rights Campaign Report
August 22, 2001

David M. Smith, Communications Director & Senior Strategist
Human Rights Campaign

Gary J. Gates, Ph.D.
Population Studies Center
The Urban Institute

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Human Rights Campaign
919 18th St., N.W., Ste. 800
Washington, D.C. 20006
phone: 202/628-4160
fax: 202/347-5323
web: www.hrc.org

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INTRODUCTION

The 2000 U.S. Census Bureau figures for same-sex unmarried partner households provide researchers and policy makers with a wealth of information about a previously unrecognized constituency. These numbers provide policy makers at every level of government compelling arguments for why they need to take care of the policy needs of gay and lesbian families as they live in nearly every corner of every county in America.

The notion that gay and lesbian people only live on the coasts in major urban areas has been dispelled by these U.S. Census Bureau statistics. The geographical diversity of where gay and lesbian families are living is striking. From big cities to small farming towns, from the deep South to the Pacific Northwest, gay and lesbian families are part of the American landscape.

These figures will change the debate for many Americans — from an abstract controversy read about in newspapers or seen in noisy debates on television to a discussion about real families, real people and real lives.

To date, the U.S. Census Bureau has only released counts of gay and lesbian coupled households, but as more information is released, we will be able to determine the number of children living in these households, income, racial profile, home ownership and other important demographics. These facts will help us dispel stereotypes and present a fuller, more accurate picture of the gay and lesbian family in America.

RELEASE OF 2000 DATA AND FLAWS IN 1990 COMPARISONS

The U.S. Census Bureau has been releasing data throughout the summer on the basic composition of households in the United States. These data were collected from a 100 percent sample of the population and are designated by the Census Bureau as Summary File 1. The U.S. Census Bureau released these data in batches of states during June, July and August, with the final batch released on Aug. 22, 2001. From these data, it was possible to determine the numbers of households where the occupants described themselves as two people of the same sex whose relationship was defined as being "unmarried partners." Also, if two people of the same sex described themselves as in a spousal (legally married) relationship, the U.S. Census Bureau recategorized them as same-sex unmarried partners (two people of the same sex cannot be legally married). Thus, these data provide at least a superficial count of the number of gay or lesbian coupled households in the United States. Census 2000 counted 601,209 same-sex unmarried partner households in the United States. That is a 314 percent increase from 1990 when the census counted only 145,130 same-sex unmarried partner households.

The U.S. Census Bureau maintains that the 1990 and 2000 censuses cannot be compared because of flaws in the way they classified such households in 1990. In that case, when same-sex partner households identified themselves as being legally married, the Census Bureau in most instances changed the gender of the spouse. Such households were therefore counted as a heterosexual married couple. In the 2000 count, such couples were reclassified as unmarried partners. In effect, the U.S. Census Bureau is saying it undercounted the 1990 same-sex unmarried partner households and that comparing them to 2000 numbers would not be valid.

While we presume the flaws in the 1990 reclassification would have some impact on the total percentage increase in same-sex unmarried partner households, it is our view that Census 2000 does in fact reflect an actual increase over the 1990 count. This is due largely to more couples being willing to identify themselves in a federal survey as a result of a more favorable political climate.

UNDERCOUNT

It is our view that the 2000 numbers for same-sex unmarried partner households are a dramatic increase from 1990, but the total number still represents an undercount of the actual number of gay or lesbian coupled households in the country. Possible explanations for this include continued prejudice and discrimination against gay people. In addition, despite efforts by the Human Rights Campaign, the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and the Institute for Gay and Lesbian Strategic Studies, urging gay and lesbian couples to fill out the census form accurately, the questionnaire might have been confusing to some. In addition, the questionnaire did not ask the actual sexual orienta-

tion of the respondent so gay and lesbian households were determined by gender and relationship only. The U.S. Census Bureau did not count single gay or lesbian people, nor did it count those people in relationships but not living together in the same residence.

Studies on the total number of gay and lesbian people in the United States show a range from 2 percent to 10 percent of the total population. In the last three elections, the Voter News Service exit poll registered the gay vote between 4 percent and 5 percent. While concluding that the Census 2000 undercounted the total number of gay or lesbian households, for the purposes of this study, we estimate the gay and lesbian population at 5 percent of the total U.S. population over 18 years of age, (209,128,094). This results in an estimated total gay and lesbian population of 10,456,405. A recent study of gay and lesbian voting habits conducted by Harris Interactive [1] determined that 30 percent of gay and lesbian people are living in a committed relationship in the same residence. Black, Gates, et. al [2] find a similar figure in their study recently published in "Demography." Using that figure, we suggest that 3,136,921 gay or lesbian people are living in the United States in committed relationships in the same residence. Census 2000 counted 1,202,418 gay and lesbian people in committed relationships. Under the assumptions stated above, this represents an undercount of 62 percent.

STATES

In 2000, California, New York, Texas and Florida led the country in total number of same-sex unmarried partner households. However, when we examine the fraction of all coupled households (married and unmarried partners) that are gay and lesbian, the prevalence ranking is more geographically diverse.

Table #1 — State Totals and 1990 Comparisons

Table #2 — States Ranked by Percentage of Coupled Households (married and unmarried partners) That Are Gay or Lesbian

Figure #1 — Statewide Prevelence of Gay and Lesbian Couples

COUNTIES

Gay and lesbian families live in 99.3 percent of all counties in the United States. This is in stark contrast to 1990 when the U.S. Census Bureau counted gay and lesbian families living in only 52 percent of U.S. counties. Again, we believe this rise is due to more gay and lesbian families willing to come forward and identify themselves in a federal survey.

Table #3 — Top 25 Counties Ranked by Percentage of Coupled Households (married and unmarried partners) That Are Gay or Lesbian

Table #4 — Counties with No Gay or Lesbian Couples

METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS

Metropolitan Statistical Areas are U.S. Census Bureau geographical regions comprised of areas in and around major cities.

Table #5 — Top 25 Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) Ranked by Percentage of Coupled Households (married and unmarried partners) That Are Gay or Lesbian

Table #6 — Bottom 25 MSAs Ranked by Percentage of Coupled Households (married and unmarried partners) That Are Gay or Lesbian

Table #7 — MSAs with 1 Million-Plus Populations Ranked by Percentage of Coupled Households (married and unmarried partners) That Are Gay or Lesbian

TRACTS

A tract is a geographic designation that approximates a neighborhood, roughly 1500 households. We looked at the top 1 percent of tracts with the heaviest concentration of gay and lesbian couples among all coupled households (married and unmarried). The following table ranks Metropolitan Statistical Areas (MSAs) in the top 1 percentile.

Table #8 — MSAs With the Most Tracts in the Top 1 Percent of Concentration of Gay and Lesbian Couples

GAY AND LESBIAN RURAL HOUSEHOLDS

Many gay and lesbian families live outside major metropolitan cities. Census 2000 reports 88,606 or 15 percent of gay and lesbian families are living outside Metropolitan Statistical Areas in rural settings. The following table looks at the top 25 counties with the highest percentage of coupled (married and unmarried partners) households that are gay or lesbian.

Table #9 — Top 25 Counties Outside of Metropolitan Statistical Areas with the Highest Percentage of Couples (married or unmarried partner) That Are Gay or Lesbian.

SUMMARY OF KEY FIGURES

- 601,209 total gay and lesbian families were reported by the 2000 U.S. Census. 304,148 gay male families, and 297,061 lesbian families.
- In 1990, the U.S. Census Bureau reported 145,130 total gay and lesbian families. 81,343 male, and 63,787 female. The 2000 numbers represent a 314 percent increase.
- Gay and lesbian families live in 99.3 percent of all counties in the United States compared to 1990 when gay and lesbian families reported living in 52 percent of all counties. In 2000, only 22 of the 3,219 counties in the United States reported.
- The Human Rights Campaign estimates that the 2000 U.S. Census count of gay and lesbian families could be undercounted as much as 62 percent.

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1. "Out and Into The Voting Booth: Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, & Transgender Voters in 2000," Gill Foundation, Harris Interactive, February 16, 2001 http://www.gillfoundation.com/gotv2000/index.htm

2. Dan Black; Gates, Gary; Sanders, Seth; Taylor, Lowell. "Demographics of the Gay and Lesbian Population in the United States: Evidence from Available Systematic Data Sources," Demography, Volume 37-No. 2, May 2000: 139-154.

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TABLE 1 — STATE TOTALS AND 1990 COMPARISONS

STATE	GAY	LESBIAN	G/L TOTAL	G/L 1990	%CHANGE
Alabama	3980	4129	8109	1069	659%
Alaska	483	697	1180	265	345%
Arizona	6278	6054	12332	2337	428%
Arkansas	2176	2247	4423	506	774%
California	49614	42524	92138	36602	152%
Colorado	4640	5405	10045	2070	385%
Connecticut	3559	3827	7386	2088	254%
Delaware	979	889	1868	212	781%
District of Columbia	2693	985	3678	2213	66%
Florida	22988	18060	41048	8492	383%
Georgia	10251	9037	19288	3502	451%
Hawaii	1234	1155	2389	602	297%
Idaho	902	971	1873	178	952%
Illinois	12155	10732	22887	6220	268%
Indiana	5054	5165	10219	1935	428%
Iowa	1789	1909	3698	613	503%
Kansas	1888	2085	3973	647	514%
Kentucky	3310	3804	7114	862	725%
Louisiana	4180	4628	8808	1331	562%
Maine	1493	1901	3394	814	317%
Maryland	5230	6013	11243	3028	271%
Massachusetts	7943	9156	17099	5194	229%
Michigan	7293	8075	15368	3389	353%
Minnesota	4290	4857	9147	3052	200%
Mississippi	2251	2523	4774	673	609%
Missouri	4684	4744	9428	1931	388%
Montana	554	664	1218	286	326%
Nebraska	1112	1220	2332	455	413%
Nevada	2739	2234	4973	613	711%
New Hampshire	1156	1547	2703	658	311%
New Jersey	8257	8347	16604	3562	366%
New Mexico	1901	2595	4496	850	429%
New York	24494	21996	46490	13748	238%
North Carolina	7849	8349	16198	1976	720%
North Dakota	360	343	703	103	583%
Ohio	9266	9671	18937	3777	401%
Oklahoma	2811	2952	5763	908	535%
Oregon	3846	5086	8932	2263	295%
Pennsylvania	10492	10674	21166	4763	344%
Rhode Island	1172	1299	2471	497	397%
South Carolina	3561	4048	7609	1067	613%
South Dakota	389	437	826	47	1657%
Tennessee	5090	5099	10189	1340	660%
Texas	21740	21172	42912	7871	445%
Utah	1665	1705	3370	401	740%
Vermont	762	1171	1933	370	422%
Virginia	7053	6749	13802	3067	350%
Washington	7652	8248	15900	4344	266%
West Virginia	1494	1422	2916	307	850%
Wisconsin	3862	4370	8232	2002	311%
Wyoming	412	395	807	30	2590%
Puerto Rico	3122	3696	6818	N/A	N/A
TOTALS	**304,148**	**297,061**	**601,209**	**145,130**	**314%**

TABLE 2 — STATES RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF COUPLED HOUSEHOLDS (married and unmarried partners) THAT ARE GAY OR LESBIAN

STATE	PERCENT	STATE	PERCENT
United States	0.99		
District of Columbia	5.14	Illinois	0.89
California	1.40	Virginia	0.89
Vermont	1.34	Alaska	0.89
Massachusetts	1.29	Mississippi	0.84
New York	1.27	Alabama	0.84
Washington	1.20	Minnesota	0.82
New Mexico	1.17	Tennessee	0.80
Nevada	1.16	Pennsylvania	0.78
Florida	1.15	Kentucky	0.77
Oregon	1.15	Missouri	0.75
Georgia	1.14	Ohio	0.75
Rhode Island	1.12	Oklahoma	0.75
Arizona	1.12	Indiana	0.74
Maine	1.09	Arkansas	0.73
Delaware	1.09	Utah	0.72
Colorado	1.06	Michigan	0.71
Maryland	1.02	Wyoming	0.69
Hawaii	1.00	West Virginia	0.67
Texas	0.99	Wisconsin	0.67
Connecticut	0.99	Kansas	0.65
Louisiana	0.99	Idaho	0.63
Puerto Rico	0.94	Nebraska	0.60
New Jersey	0.93	Montana	0.58
New Hampshire	0.92	Iowa	0.54
North Carolina	0.91	South Dakota	0.48
South Carolina	0.89	North Dakota	0.47

TABLE 3 — TOP 25 COUNTIES RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF COUPLED HOUSEHOLDS (married and unmarried partners) THAT ARE GAY OR LESBIAN

STATE	COUNTY	PERCENT
CA	San Francisco County	6.91
DC	District of Columbia	5.14
NY	New York County	4.34
MA	Suffolk County	3.55
VA	Arlington County	3.13
GA	DeKalb County	2.97
CO	Denver County	2.95
VA	Alexandria city	2.93
FL	Monroe County	2.86
MA	Hampshire County	2.80
MO	St. Louis city	2.68
LA	Orleans Parish	2.55
GA	Fulton County	2.53
OR	Multnomah County	2.46
MD	Baltimore city	2.43
VA	Richmond city	2.30
NM	Santa Fe County	2.22
NY	Tompkins County	2.19
CA	Sonoma County	2.15
CA	Alameda County	2.11
MA	Franklin County	2.08
WA	King County	2.07
MA	Nantucket County	1.99
VA	Charlottesville city	1.98
SC	Allendale County	1.94

TABLE 4 — COUNTIES WITH NO GAY OR LESBIAN COUPLES

STATE	COUNTY	PERCENT
CO	Cheyenne County	0.00
NE	Hayes County	0.00
NE	Greeley County	0.00
TX	Loving County	0.00
CO	Hinsdale County	0.00
NE	Hooker County	0.00
NE	Blaine County	0.00
OK	Cimarron County	0.00
NE	Logan County	0.00
MT	Liberty County	0.00
SD	Buffalo County	0.00
NE	Boyd County	0.00
TX	Kenedy County	0.00
NE	Arthur County	0.00
ND	Hettinger County	0.00
NE	Loup County	0.00
ID	Oneida County	0.00
HI	Kalawao County	0.00
NE	Wheeler County	0.00
NE	Webster County	0.00
TX	Roberts County	0.00
ND	Slope County	0.00

TABLE 5 — TOP 25 METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS (MSAs) RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF COUPLED HOUSEHOLDS (married and unmarried partners) THAT ARE GAY OR LESBIAN

CITY, STATE	% OF G/L COUPLES
San Francisco — Oakland — San Jose, CA	2.04
Santa Fe, NM	1.95
Portland, ME	1.60
Miami — Fort Lauderdale, FL	1.56
Bloomington, IN	1.55
Austin — San Marcos, TX	1.53
Madison, WI	1.49
Burlington, VT	1.48
Springfield, MA	1.47
Seattle — Tacoma, WA	1.47
Albuquerque, NM	1.44
Gainesville, FL	1.44
Iowa City, IA	1.42
Atlanta, GA	1.40
New Orleans, LA	1.38
Asheville, NC	1.37
San Diego, CA	1.36
Eugene, OR	1.31
Los Angeles, CA	1.29
Portland, OR	1.28
New York — Long Island, NY	1.28
Sacramento — Yolo, CA	1.28
Lawrence, KS	1.28
Denver — Boulder — Greeley, CO	1.28
Athens, GA	1.27

TABLE 6 — BOTTOM 25 MSAs RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF COUPLED HOUSEHOLDS (married and unmarried partners) THAT ARE GAY OR LESBIAN

CITY, STATE	% OF G/L COUPLES
Lawton, OK	0.55
Fargo — Moorhead, ND	0.55
Saginaw — Bay City — Midland, MI	0.55
Elkhart — Goshen, IN	0.55
Altoona, PA	0.55
Eau Claire, WI	0.54
Sioux City, IA	0.54
Youngstown — Warren, OH	0.54
Johnstown, PA	0.53
Joplin, MO	0.52
Owensboro, KY	0.52
Great Falls, MT	0.51
Sioux Falls, SD	0.51
St. Cloud, MN	0.50
Appleton — Oshkosh — Neenah, WI	0.50
Cheyenne, WY	0.50
Sharon, PA	0.47
Lima, OH	0.45
Wausau, WI	0.45
Sheboygan, WI	0.44
Grand Forks, ND	0.44
Bismarck, ND	0.44
Rapid City, SD	0.41
Provo — Orem, UT	0.38
Dubuque, IA	0.29

TABLE 7 — MSAs WITH 1 MILLION-PLUS POPULATIONS RANKED BY PERCENTAGE OF COUPLED HOUSEHOLDS (married and unmarried partners) THAT ARE GAY OR LESBIAN

CITY, STATE	PERCENT
San Francisco — Oakland — San Jose, CA	2.04
Miami — Fort Lauderdale, FL	1.56
Austin — San Marcos, TX	1.53
Seattle — Tacoma—Bremerton, WA	1.47
Atlanta, GA	1.40
New Orleans, LA	1.38
San Diego, CA	1.36
Los Angeles — Riverside — Orange County, CA	1.29
Portland — Salem, OR	1.28
New York — N. New Jersey — Long Island, NY	1.28
Sacramento — Yolo, CA	1.28
Denver — Boulder — Greeley, CO	1.28
Washington, DC — Baltimore, MD	1.26
Orlando, FL	1.25
Tampa — St. Petersburg — Clearwater, FL	1.23
Boston — Worcester — Lawrence, MA	1.22
Columbus, OH	1.20
Las Vegas, NV	1.20
Dallas — Fort Worth, TX	1.15
Phoenix — Mesa, AZ	1.15
West Palm Beach — Boca Raton, FL	1.15
Raleigh — Durham — Chapel Hill, NC	1.14
Houston — Galveston — Brazoria, TX	1.13
Providence — Warwick, RI — Fall River, MA	1.10
Hartford, CT	1.05
Minneapolis — St. Paul, MN	1.05
Philadelphia, PA	1.02
San Juan — Caguas — Arecibo, PR	1.02
Chicago, IL — Gary, IN — Kenosha, WI	1.02
Nashville, TN	1.01
Jacksonville, FL	0.99
Indianapolis, IN	0.98
Charlotte, NC	0.97
San Antonio, TX	0.94
Louisville, KY	0.92
Rochester, NY	0.91
Greensboro — Winston-Salem — High Point, NC	0.90
Oklahoma City, OK	0.90
Salt Lake City — Ogden, UT	0.88
Kansas City, MO — KS	0.88
Norfolk — Virginia Beach, VA	0.79
Cleveland — Akron, OH	0.78
Milwaukee — Racine, WI	0.78
St. Louis, MO	0.78
Detroit — Ann Arbor — Flint, MI	0.77
Cincinnati, OH	0.77
Grand Rapids — Muskegon — Holland, MI	0.71
Pittsburgh, PA	0.70
Buffalo — Niagara Falls, NY	0.66

TABLE 8 — MSAs WITH THE MOST TRACTS IN THE TOP 1 PERCENT OF CONCENTRATION OF GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES

CITIES	# OF TRACTS
San Francisco — Oakland — San Jose, CA	83
New York — N. New Jersey — Long Island, NY	62
Los Angeles — Riverside, CA	48
Washington, DC — Baltimore, MD	41
Atlanta, GA	38
Chicago, IL — Gary, IN — Kenosha, WI	27
San Diego, CA	23
New Orleans, LA	22
Boston — Worcester — Lawrence, MA	21
Seattle — Tacoma — Bremerton, WA	20
Minneapolis — St. Paul, MN	18
Miami — Fort Lauderdale, FL	16
Philadelphia, PA	16
Denver — Boulder — Greeley, CO	15
Columbus, OH	14
Dallas — Fort Worth, TX	14
Houston — Galveston — Brazoria, TX	14
Kansas City, MO	10
Sacramento — Yolo, CA	9
Portland, OR	8
Tampa — St. Petersburg — Clearwater, FL	8
Cleveland — Akron, OH	7
Indianapolis, IN	7

TABLE 9 — TOP 25 COUNTIES OUTSIDE OF METROPOLITAN STATISTICAL AREAS WITH THE HIGHEST PERCENTAGE OF COUPLES (married or unmarried partner) THAT ARE GAY OR LESBIAN.

STATE	COUNTY	PERCENT
FL	Monroe County	2.86
NY	Tompkins County	2.19
MA	Franklin County	2.08
MA	Nantucket County	1.99
SC	Allendale County	1.94
SD	Shannon County	1.90
CO	Gilpin County	1.84
VT	Windham County	1.78
GA	Stewart County	1.68
NV	Esmeralda County	1.67
SD	Dewey County	1.66
VT	Orange County	1.62
AL	Perry County	1.62
AK	Denali Borough	1.61
AL	Bullock County	1.59
PR	Vieques Municipio	1.58
KY	Lyon County	1.53
VA	Emporia city	1.53
CA	Mendocino County	1.51
WA	San Juan County	1.50
CA	Lake County	1.49
NC	Northampton County	1.47
DE	Sussex County	1.47
HI	Maui County	1.45
ID	Lewis County	1.44

FIGURE 1 — STATEWIDE PREVALENCE OF GAY AND LESBIAN COUPLES

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